

OTHER COMMITTEES AND GROUPS

EASTERN CLUSTER OF LUTHERAN SEMINARIES

The Eastern Cluster of Lutheran Seminaries spent the last year developing and strengthening the major programs that it has launched. It was felt by the Eastern Cluster Board in the last year that we needed to sustain our many programs and not begin any new initiatives.

The Connect Program

The Connect program directed by Don Johnson has blossomed under his leadership. This program, funded by the Lilly Endowment Inc., that is designed to raise up a whole new generation of pastors is breathtaking in its scope. Hundreds of college-age students have identified themselves as interested in the ministry and scores are being cultivated in their discernment. Connect has also developed an elaborate network of individuals and institutions that are committed to identifying, nurturing, and sustaining candidates for ministry. The three seminaries are already seeing those cultivated by both Theological Education with Youth and Connect in their prospective student visits. Theological Education with Youth is another program that cultivates theological study and vocations among high school youth. Our Directors of Admission collaborate closely in their work together to help all students in their discernment.

The collaborations among our Cluster faculty and staff are deep. In the Diaconal Ministry program, centered at Gettysburg Seminary, representatives of the three faculties regularly serve together as instructors. This is also true of The Theological Education with Youth Program that is sponsored by Philadelphia Seminary and Gettysburg. The Cluster DMin program at Philadelphia Seminary has had long-standing collaboration from all three deans and faculties. Thus the Cluster tries to steward the resources of the church by not duplicating administration of programs. This concept is also catching on among all eight seminaries. The faculties have also done serious work on the three common writing and lecture projects and are planning to meet in retreat in the fall of 2009.

The One Library in Three Locations

The One Library in Three Locations has matured in amazing ways. Staffing, ordering and acquisitions, and sharing of volumes have been coordinated in a way that has resulted in substantial savings. Our library directors, deans, and faculties are collaborating with each other to maximize this model relationship. We are finding

that it is not always easy to sustain such collaboration across miles and institutions, but it is withstanding the test of time.

I am grateful to our Cluster Chair, The Rev. Glenn Ludwig, the other officers of the board, and my two colleague presidents and the deans who make the Cluster work. Beginning in July, the Rev. Marcus Miller, President of Southern Seminary, will assume the role of Executive Director of the Cluster for two years. We have a strong and visionary board, and I am delighted to be a part of this wonderful collaborative effort. Of course, we must always thank Tricia Casto, our coordinator, and Lois LaCroix, the administrative assistant to the executive director for their expert help and leadership.

An Emerging Eastern Network

What began as a limited vision for three seminaries working together has evolved quickly into a much broader “network” of educational providers. In the process of developing the foundation for *Project Connect*, an eastern network involving 5 colleges, 6 campus ministries, 6 camps, the Lutheran Volunteer Corps, Lutheran Services in America, and the largest eastern social ministry organization, *Diakon*, banded together. Building on the strong foundation laid by the most recent Teagle Foundation grant, a life long learning (continuing education) platform was organized and is poised to support a vast array of courses and educational offerings (for both classroom and online/distance delivery). A Network Coordinating Council for Life long Learning has been formed under the initial leadership of a highly regarded senior educational professional, Dr. Nelvin Vos. Its membership spans eastern Lutheran leadership and may be expanded ecumenically as opportunities arise. Thus we are taking the model of savings and expanded service to new levels of collaboration with colleges and other institutions through which we hope to model the collaboration we have developed over the past decade, thanks to the generosity and encouragement of the Luce and Teagle Foundations.

Philip D. Krey, executive director

ELCA MISSION INVESTMENT FUND

Mission Investment Fund (MIF) of the ELCA serves this synod by providing loans for capital projects to new mission congregations, established congregations, and ELCA-related ministries. Loans are made possible by investments in MIF by congregations

and their members, synods and ELCA-related ministries.

More than 780 MIF loans totaling \$446 million are at work today in ELCA ministries throughout the United States, the Virgin Islands and the Caribbean.

In the Northeastern PA Synod, 13 congregations and ministries have received Mission Investment Fund loans totaling \$ 3.4 million, while many individuals, congregations [and the synod] have investments in the Fund totaling \$ 6.2 million.*

MIF serves ELCA ministries. In addition to the loans and investments that it offers, the Mission Investment Fund provides consulting services to ELCA congregations through its church building consultants and staff architects. The consultants help congregational leaders to explore options for church construction financing and plans for building projects. The staff architects provide initial schematic design proposals that congregations can take to local architects. The consultants' and architects' services are provided at no charge. The Fund's area representatives are available to meet with congregations and ELCA-related ministries regarding loan and investment opportunities offered by MIF.

Has your congregation invested? Have members of your congregation invested? Join the thousands of individuals, ELCA congregations, ELCA-related ministries, and synods including the Northeastern PA Synod – that are earning interest on their investments as they help to build the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Your participation enables MIF to continue this vital ministry. A variety of investment opportunities are available and may be opened with initial investments of as low as \$25. Information on investments and ministry loans is available at www.MissionInvestmentFund.org and through the MIF representatives listed below who serve this synod.

Thank you for your support of and participation in the Mission Investment Fund of the ELCA. It is a joy for both of us to work in partnership with you for the advancement of God's kingdom.

Mark Wimmer, area representative
Jeff Spann, church building consultant

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN COALITION FOR MISSION IN APPALACHIA (ELCMA)

ELCMA Connects and Equips God's People for Christ's Mission in Appalachia by working in three strategy areas. Using them as framework, I will attempt to itemize some of the ministry we engaged in during 2007:

1. EQUIPPING FOR OUTREACH - ELCMA partners with other entities of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to equip the saints, to reach out and witness to the Gospel in Appalachia by:

- a. producing and/or circulating materials like SCS material, Handbook for Small Churches and *Just Neighbors*.
- b. training events such as Grant Writing for Beginners and Advocacy in My Community.
- c. supporting and encouraging and resourcing new mission starts and reconfiguring congregations in conjunction with their Mission Directors such as meeting with new ministry starts in rural Appalachia.
- d. educating Women of the ELCA members via immersion experiences in Southwestern VA and eastern TN on justice work, inviting them to join the work.

2. ADVOCATING FOR JUSTICE - ELCMA, along with other ELCA entities as well as ecumenical partners - witnesses with the people in Appalachia to advance human rights and justice in:

- a. sustainable living ideas are being promoted as we move from our inaugural advocacy summit held December, 2007 for Lutheran, ecumenical and grassroots community groups working in collaboration on education, advocacy and action steps promoting a lifestyle that will protect the environment, our health and our local economies.
- b. addressing realities of poverty and injustice such as a successful project in SC Synod aimed at ending the injustices in food distribution for the hungry.
- c. Diversity Awareness training has begun in earnest at our annual assembly in Birmingham, AL by visiting the Civil Rights Museum and talking out some of the issues it surfaced. ELCMA Council is reading and discussing *Dismantling Racism* with two leaders trained in anti-racism. Work continues with our Council and at our assemblies. And we are working to make sure our immersions focus on the racism issues in the area of the immersion

3. NETWORKING - ELCMA builds relationships and connects resources with opportunities through:

- a. encouraging first call clergy through visits, listening, praying with/for, connecting, and

resourcing their congregations as they reach out into their communities.

- b. conducting various immersions expanding the network, informing people outside the region on issues and assets in the region, building cooperation, and growing resources for everyone.
- c. ELCMA's Annual Appalachian Assembly, our number one networking tool, was held in Johnstown, PA showcasing ministry in central PA. The sharing of faith journeys was a highlight of this assembly.

Each of the sixteen Appalachian Synods plays a pivotal role in this ministry. In addition to financial gifts, you send delegates to the annual assemblies, loan leadership for various task groups and committees, and include ELCMA in synodical activities. These people continue the work of ELCMA in the various small towns and rural places for all of us. Finally, your partnership in prayer for ELCMA and for the ministries in the quarterly Prayer Invitations is your greatest gift to us. Thank you for your continued participation with ELCMA. I look forward to our continued cooperative efforts in the future.

Dory Campbell, ELCMA coordinator

LUTHERAN ADVOCACY MINISTRY IN PENNSYLVANIA (LAMPa)

*Step forward as a public church that witnesses
boldly to God's love for all that God has created . .*

LAMPa advocates in the places of power, where decisions are made, for those whose voices have been muted by oppression and economic injustice. The General Assembly and other state government agency policymakers are central focal points for this advocacy.

Social Statements and Messages of the ELCA and Lutheran theological understanding of the role of government are the foundation for LAMPa's advocacy. Two primary issues have been selected for the 2007-2008 legislative session:

- Poverty/Hunger
- Health/Health Care

No amount of direct advocacy with policymakers in Harrisburg can equal the power of voters...in LAMPa's case, the voices of Lutherans who take seriously their faith as they seek justice for all people. By sharing resources, conducting adult issue forums and doing advocacy training, LAMPa

seeks to equip Lutherans in PA to become advocates.

- *InterSections* is a periodic newsletter that highlights significant public policy issues, provides commentary and reflection, and signals important statewide events.
- *ACTIONET* is a growing network of Lutherans who take seriously their role as "citizens with faith." They write, call, and visit legislators to share their commitment to the basic worth of all people and to the responsibility of government to serve the common good. *ACTIONET* is central to how Lutheran advocacy happens in PA.

2007 in review

- LAMPa is strong. It has gone through transition and has been active in the State Capitol during this past year.
- Over 150 Lutherans gathered in Harrisburg on May 9 for Lutheran Day at the Capitol.
- LAMPa has reframed itself so that it can have two professionals beginning this year.
- LAMPa has fully engaged the Seminaries and the Social Ministry Organizations.
- New initiatives in 2008 include: Hunger 101 Pilot Project and leadership in the Pennsylvania Health Access Network (advocacy for health care access).

A word of gratitude to the Northeastern PA Synod for its financial support, for the many years of vision and commitment to justice of Bishop David Strobel, and the leadership of LAMPa Public Policy Council members, Judith Gifford and Kenneth Miller.

In 2008, LAMPa begins a fourth decade of public policy and advocacy ministry in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Thanks be to God for our partnership in advocacy ministry with and for the poor, vulnerable, disenfranchised, and for all of God's creation!

Neil P. Harrison, executive director

LUTHERAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Our October 27, 2007 Annual Meeting was held a stone's throw from where the first log church was established in Allentown in 1762. A Lutheran congregation was established with John Joseph Roth as its first pastor. There are 12 Lutheran congregations in the Allentown area within just one mile.

This has been another particularly good year for the Society, but not without some challenges. Our membership is aging and some key volunteers needed to step back for health and other reasons. In some way our membership parallels that of the larger church. We have a modest reserve. Younger people are not showing interest and respect for church history that might have existed in the past.

These things notwithstanding, our activity level is good; participation in consistent and enthusiasm is high. We are embarking on some exciting projects and have received significant grant support for one of them. Over the past year we have made strides to learn about and celebrate the ministries of several historical congregations in Eastern Pennsylvania. We have also used history to continue to further ecumenical intentions and seen how the church has made an impact on our society.

We began the year with our Winter Happening luncheon at Moselem Springs on January 27, 2007. At that meeting John Peterson, curator of the Lutheran Archives Center in Philadelphia spoke on the Lutheran Church in the "Nifty Fifties". On April 28, 2007, our program was called "Shakahoppa" and we visited two German Churches in Old Goschenhoppen. During our Summer Pilgrimage we toured four historic churches along Hex Highway (Old 22) on a "Journey to Altalaha". October 28, 2007 we visited the Lehigh County Historical Center in Allentown, Trout Hall, Zion Reformed UCC and Liberty Bell Museum and St. Paul's Lutheran Church.

In addition to our traditional "Happenings" and "Pilgrimages", we continue working to produce and publish a *Guide to Colonial Lutheran Sites and Churches in Eastern Pennsylvania*. The book spans a period from 1638 to 1776. So far over 175 sites have been identified and are being researched. We were recently notified of a \$5,000 grant from the State of Pennsylvania to pay for the printing of the guide. We also published two issues of the *Periodical*, under the editorship of Dr. Hellerich, who agreed to continue this year until a successor was found. Pastor Paul Kramp also requested to step down after many long years as treasurer. During the year we were all saddened by the unexpected death of Dr. David Wartluft, who was a longtime supporter, board member and officer of the society.

None of this would be possible without support of you our members, board and officers. All of us serve as volunteers. To those leaving the Board and to officers completing their terms, we express our sincere thanks. And to all of you who come faithfully to our meetings and events, you are the

heart and soul of the society. Thank you for caring about the rich Lutheran heritage, which we have inherited in Eastern Pennsylvania.

Richard B. Baumann, president.

LUTHERAN PLANNED GIVING OF CENTRAL AND NORTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA

Lutheran Planned Giving of Central and Northeastern Pennsylvania brings together the ministry partners in our area along with the churchwide ministries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to promote charitable giving. As the director of Lutheran Planned Giving and a charitable gift planner for the Foundation of the ELCA, I am ready to provide donor education, assist donors with their donations, work with congregations as they establish a mission endowment fund, and assist congregations to grow their funds. These services are available to any Lutheran congregation or ministry without charge or obligation.

Statistics indicate that 80% of the estate gifts received by congregations come in the form of a will bequest. However, only about 9% of the ELCA Lutherans who die each year remembered their congregation in a will or other estate plan. In general, over 60% of the people who die each year never took the time to write a will. One of the goals of the Lutheran Planned Giving program is to encourage folks to write a will and if they have a will to be sure it is up to date. And a second goal is to encourage people to remember their congregation and other favorite church ministries in their estate plan.

For the record, I am continuing the process of visiting all the conferences and/or mission districts of the four synods I serve. I conducted 13 Legacy Seminars and made 16 mission endowment consults helping congregations establish endowment funds or tune up an existing fund. I made 195 donor calls which resulted in 27 irrevocable gifts totaling \$436,000. I also assisted many congregations and institutions in my service area invest in the Pooled Trust Fund A, which is a balance fund investment managed by the ELCA for the benefit of any ELCA related ministry.

Finally, thank you very much for your support. Without your financial support, words of wisdom and encouragement, and especially your prayers, I would not have been able to accomplish what I did. Your support is essential to the success of this program. I would like to especially thank the Steering Committee who oversees the operation of the program on behalf of all the members. For more information about the Lutheran Planned Giv-

ing Program or to schedule a Legacy Seminar or a Mission Endowment Fund consult, please contact me at 570-374-2044 or kramerga@ptd.net.

Gregory A. Kramer, director

PENNSYLVANIA LUTHERAN NETWORK

The Pennsylvania Lutheran Network (PLN) was begun in the year 2000. It is not a program or organization but a network of partners in ministry. PLN facilitates opportunities for partners to know and affirm one another, to support each other's vocation in the church and the world, to connect for mutual benefit in events, projects, and ministries as partners in and related to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

PLN includes the seven synods and their member congregations located within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, four colleges and universities, two seminaries, eighteen social ministry organizations, eight camps and all campus ministries throughout the state.

The 2008 PLN Assembly was held at Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Camp Hill. The theme for the assembly focused upon our theology of vocation. The Rev. Dr. John F. Hoffmeyer, a member of the faculty at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, and Don Johnson, Executive Director of "Project Connect", were the keynote speakers.

The PLN Planning Council, which meets three times each year, is enthusiastic about the potential for the collaboration of PLN Partners around our understanding of vocation. The planning council continues to work on a plan for communications and efforts to discuss our identity as Lutheran ministries.

More information about PLN is available at www.palutherannetwork.org.

Ralph E. Jones, convener

POCONO AREA LUTHERAN MINISTRY (PALM)

In the summer of 1966 I had the opportunity to work as a summer chaplain in Shenandoah National Park through the auspices of a group known as Christian Ministry in the National Parks. During the week I was asked to do a variety of tasks including one night as a bartender (you don't want to know what a fiasco that was). Then on Saturdays I would visit people in the campgrounds and invite them to a Christian Service of Worship, usually in the amphitheater on Sunday morning, which I led. It was a wonderful learning experi-

ence for me. And if you travel to a National Park this summer and spend a Sunday there, you may still be offered the chance to attend a time of worship with other Christian people, led by a nervous young seminarian or college student.

PALM offers much the same type of worship experience at a number of private and state-owned campgrounds around our synodical territory. Last summer we held worship at seven different campgrounds and one congregation, St. Paul's, Hawley, leads worship year round at Woodloch Pines Resort. Over 2,700 people took advantage of the opportunity to worship God in the park setting. We also led four canoe trips on the Delaware River for groups from our congregations. We did these things to attempt to carry out our mission statement: *PALM shares the good news of God's love with all who live, work, or vacation in the leisure/recreation settings of the Pocono region.*

Maybe we'll see you at one of our gatherings this summer. Peace, PALM

Lynn Rothrock, chair

REGION 7

Region 7 is the "meeting point" for the six synods of the ELCA located in the Northeast, and the non-geographical Slovak-Zion synod with the churchwide expression of the ELCA, based in Chicago. Located on the campus of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, the regional office seeks to enhance relationships and work among the partner synods, the seminary, the churchwide office of the ELCA and other ministries located on our territory. We do this by working with the bishops and other leaders to accomplish ministry across the synod lines.

In 2007 the Region 7 office supported the mission of the ELCA in the Northeast in the following areas:

- Candidacy: participation in 25 synod candidacy meetings (in six synods), facilitation of Theological Review Panels at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia for candidates coming to the ELCA from other traditions, convening the annual consultation for candidacy leaders, offering ongoing training and support to synod staff and candidacy committees, working with the staff at LTSP to educate students about the various steps of the candidacy process.
- coordinating First Call Assignment for the region.
- coordinating and directing the Institute for Congregational Ministry (our regional continuing education event for first call leaders).

- coordinating the annual regional gathering for bishops' staff.
- coordinating meetings of the regional Reconciling in Christ roundtable.
- coordinating gatherings of Christian Education and Lifelong Learning networks.
- facilitating the registration and arrangements for the Board of Pensions Pre-retirement meetings.
- providing support for the planning of the regional youth ministry gathering.

This year, the regional coordinator has also participated in activities to support synods which are anticipating the election of a new bishop. She anticipates working closely with the new bishops and their staffs as they make these critical transitions.

Leadership in Region 7 is provided by the steering committee:

- Rev. Bruce Davidson, Chair
- Bp. David Strobel
- Rev. Mark Wimmer, Treasurer
- Rev. Beth Anderson
- Rev. Nancy Brown

Peggy Wuertele, coordinator

WOMEN OF THE ELCA

As a community of women created in the image of God, we affirm our gifts and engage in ministries and actions that promote healing and wholeness in the church, society, and the world. Many of our local Congregational Units (CU) support the needs of LWR through their donations of health kits, infant layettes, school kits and quilts. As major weather related calamities and internal strife within foreign countries continue, there will always be a need and a blessing for this type of ministry to continue.

The Synod Wide Organization (SWO) provides suggested programming ideas to the Mission District Cluster leaders, through their Mission Community Planning Events, which they can then utilize as a guide for their Spring and Fall meetings. Currently we are focusing on water-related issues and how we can be better stewards of this God-given resource now and for the generations to follow. Our "Drop in the Bucket" emphasis will continue until the Spring of 2009 where donations received will benefit both the Stand with Africa water project and a local area or regional project.

The Fall Learning Event at Trinity Valley View, entitled Bold Women in Motion, shared our

Church Wide (CW) Triennial emphasis, "Raising up Healthy Women and Girls", through Healthy Heart Stations where women could participate in hands-on activities relating to our physical, emotional and spiritual health. A service of healing concluded the day, giving us a sense of wholeness and peace as we went on our way.

The theme for our 2008 Spiritual Growth Retreat, "Spirit Led-Spirit Fed to be a Blessing" will take place on March 1 at Holy Trinity in Leesport. Our keynote speaker will be Pastor Michael Ben-nethum. This will be a time to learn about the age-old practice of receiving blessings and how we are to appreciate them and pass them on to others.

The 19th Annual SWO Convention, still in the planning stages, will be held at Trinity, Hecktown on June 14, 2008. The theme "Living in God's Grace" will be exemplified through focus groups relating to Caring for our Earth (global warming and the importance of clean water) and Welcoming the Stranger (a presentation by the PA Immigration and Resource Center).

We continue to search for ways that appeal to younger women so that our organization may thrive and grow and continue to act boldly on our faith in Jesus Christ in every time and place.

Patricia A. Reitnauer, president